

THE STORY OF SUGAR

CHINA SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN THE FIRST CANE CULTIVATOR.

Originally the Product Was Employed Only Medicinally—The Art of Raising Was Invented by a Fifteenth Century Venetian.

Few other commodities possess a larger bibliography than sugar. Nevertheless the early history of sugar is wrapped in obscurity. Formerly chemists called everything a "sugar" which had a sweet taste, but the term in its scientific sense soon came to be restricted to the sweet principles in vegetable and animal juices.

That which preserveth apples and plums will also preserve liver and lungs is an old adage. But the use of sugar in syrups and preserves came later, while barely three centuries have elapsed since it became an ingredient in the popular diet of Europe.

The Venetians were the fathers of the European sugar trade. Anterior to the year 1348 they both imported considerable quantities of sugar from India and planted the cane in the island of Sicily.

The art of refining sugar and making what is called loaf sugar was invented by a Venetian citizen toward the end of the fifteenth century. This same art was first practiced in England in 1644, the adventurers being Thomas Gardiner and Sir William Chester, assisted by three Venetians.

Meanwhile the Spaniards had become in their turn the great disseminators of the sugar cultivation. The cane was planted by them in Madeira in 1420; it was carried to the West Indies in 1509, and it spread over the occupied portions of South America during the sixteenth century.

Tommy Had Help. "Tommy, I've talked to you until I'm hoarse!" "Don't blame me for all of it, mamma. You know you talked a lot to papa before he left this morning"—Yonkers Statesman.

"He's out a good deal nights, isn't he?" "He was last night. I won a hundred from him."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

FAMOUS ENGLISH WELLS.

Some Whose Waters Are Charged With Magic or Miraculous Power.

Though there are hundreds of wells supposed to possess magical power scattered all over England, the general public is ignorant of their locality or the romantic stories connected with each one.

Another well, in Monmouthshire, which has a peculiar fascination for the unmarried maidens is known as the "virtuous well." For generations the maidens of that locality have accredited it with marvelous powers in forecasting their futures.

Then there are the so called holy wells which have many medicinal virtues. Such a one is St. Winifred's, at Holywell, which is accredited with cures that are almost miraculous.

Practically all the ills to which the flesh is heir can be cured by one or another of these wells. St. Ninan's, in Cornwall, is said to restore lunatics to sanity, but the patient must be immersed in the water and held there until the breath has nearly left his body.

THE CHRYSANTHEMUM.

The first chrysanthemum show was held in Norwich, England, in 1520.

The Philadelphia Horticultural society held the first chrysanthemum show in the United States in 1883.

The first chrysanthemums brought to Europe were taken from China by skippers of the tea trading ships.

After the chrysanthemum is potted leave it for a little time in the shade. Then give it all the sun that is possible.

The chrysanthemum was introduced into England 200 years ago from China. It was grown first in Holland after its emigration.

The chrysanthemum is one of the easiest of garden flowers to grow, but it needs careful tending after it is brought into the house in pots when the frost comes.

The Change of a Name.

How family names change in the course of many years is illustrated by the conversion of "Boteville" into "Thynne." An English deed bearing date in the closing days of the fifteenth century shows three brothers then flourishing—John Boteville of Boteville and Thomas and William Boteville.

THE FIRST PRINTING.

Some of the Earliest Examples of the Art Preservative.

The following are the earliest known examples of printing—two indulgences, printed usually on one side only of a single piece of vellum and two magnificent Bibles. Of these one is known to be the first complete book that ever was printed by the wonderful new invention, which, as the early printers so often proudly state in their colophons, produced "letters without the aid of any sort of pen, whether of quill, of reed or of metal."

The first piece of printing which is actually dated is the famous indulgence of Nicholas V. to such as should contribute money to aid the king of Cyprus against the Turks. This indulgence has the printed year date 1454, and a copy in The Hague museum has the date "Nov. 15" filled in with a pen.

This thirty line edition is shown to have been printed by Peter Schoeffer de Gensheim by the fact that some of the initial letters which occur in it appear in another later indulgence of 1480, which is known to have come from his press.—Saturday Review.

A FROLIC IN MEXICO

BREAKING THE PINATA DURING THE CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL.

This Mirth Provoking Pastime is the Great Social and Fun Making Feature of the Season—Dressing and Filling the Olla.

Christmas in Mexico is not the typical Christmas of cold and snow and ice, but one of bright, warm sunshine, cloudless blue skies, flowers in profusion, trees in full foliage and a life of out of doors.

At least a week before Christmas in the principal streets of Mexico arches are erected from sidewalk to sidewalk, festooned with wreaths of flowers and bunting in the national colors—red, white and green.

In every Mexican house great preparations are made for what is called the "pinata." Every child begs and scrapes and saves the centavos for weeks and months ahead. All kinds of articles are made especially for this ceremony, and every family vies with its friends and neighbors to have its pinata more beautiful and fanciful than any one else's.

The pinata is really an earthenware utensil which is in general use for cooking. It is called in common parlance an olla and is of brown pottery something like the old fashioned earthenware crocks used in the north before enamel ware became the fad.

The pinatas are large or small, as the gurge of the purchaser permits. They are round, pot bellied and very large at the top. They are sold from door to door on the streets and in the markets. They cost only 10, 15 or 20 centavos, but the olla is the least expensive part of the game.

The body of the olla for a woman is covered with tissue paper; then a crinkled paper dress is fashioned; then a bodice is built up draped to represent a loose white waist, and above this is placed a false face. The hair is made with black paper, braided into one long plait at the back, as the women wear their hair in Mexico. Sometimes a white tehuana headdress is made of the lace paper used by bakers and confectioners.

A flower pinata is decorated with large paper flowers in every color of the rainbow. Red, white and green ribbons, forming long streamers, and silver and gold tinsel, glass balls and colored lights all help to make the flower pinata very beautiful. The possibilities for dressing these pinatas are endless.

In a large family the mother and daughters have their own pinatas, and great secrecy is maintained in the decoration of the olla. It is the aim of each to devise an original a dressing for the pinata as possible, and it can be made a very extravagant ornament. In the families of wealthy Mexicans the luxury of the pinata often mounts into thousands.

After the olla is decorated to the taste it is filled. The filling consists of peanuts, hazel nuts, hard candies, like marbles, and all kinds of Mexican dainties. These dainties are candied fruits, nut paste, etc.

Christmas night the pinatas are carried in great state into the sala and suspended from the ceiling one at a time. All the relatives of the family are present, and as cousins of the fifth and sixth degree are recognized and children are very numerous there is generally a large gathering. They all sit very demurely on chairs ranged in a row around the walls of the room.

One person is constituted master of ceremonies, the eldest son or daughter of the house. He or she stands in the middle of the room. Near by is a jar or umbrella stand filled with apisco cases or sticks. When everything is ready a child or grown person is selected and called by name. She comes forward and is blindfolded.

Then the fun begins. The person blindfolded is turned round and round until she loses all knowledge of where the pinata hangs. A cane is put in her hands, and she is told to hit the pinata and try to break it. She is given three chances. If she fails to hit it she sits down amid laughter and ridicule. If she hits it without breaking it she is entitled to a small prize.

And so it goes on, one after another being called up, blindfolded and given a cane and three chances to break the pinata. Finally one more fortunate than the rest succeeds in giving a hard enough blow, and, crash, the pinata falls to the grounds in hundreds of bits, and its contents are scattered far and wide.

A wild scramble ensues. Everybody rushes forward to gather as much of the spilled contents as possible.

The fortunate breaker of the pinata gets a handsome prize and is awarded the seat of honor. He or she sits down and is debarred from another trial at breaking another pinata. As soon as the confusion dies down and order is somewhat restored another olla is hung up and the same routine gone through. So the fun continues until the last pinata is broken, and then the prizes are awarded.

The pinata party is the great social and fun making feature of the Christmas season. After the pinatas have been broken and a supper has been served there follows dancing, or a traveling company of Indians from the mountains is brought in to sing and dance in native costume.

Even Then. Think twice before you speak, and even then use times out of ten the world won't lose anything if you keep still.—Somerville Journal.

TRICKS OF THIEVES.

Clever Schemes That Aid in the Perpetration of Crime.

"Thieves resort to clever methods in order to get away with the goods," said an old police officer, "and I am firmly convinced that if the criminals of the world would devote the same amount of time, talent and patience to thinking out uplifting and advantageous schemes for humankind they would in a short while revolutionize the world in many useful ways.

The jeweler is afraid the parrot will break something. He tries to catch it and succeeds after a short while. A small purchase is made. The man and the woman leave. Result, several hundred dollars' worth of jewelry gone. It was stolen during the excitement over the bird. Good scheme, eh? Yet it is but one out of a million worked by the clever degenerates of the world."—New Orleans Times-Democrat.

The Corset in 2000 B. C. Mr. Arthur Evans, the Oxford archaeologist, who made so many interesting discoveries in the so called palace of Minos, in Crete, found in a subterranean sanctuary certain very ancient small earthenware statues, representing some goddess and two of her servants.

A Japanese Peculiarity. "When a Japanese servant is rebuked or scolded," says a traveler, "he must smile like a Cheshire cat. The etiquette in smiles is very misleading at first. I often used to think that Tak, my ricksha 'boy,' meant to be impertinent when he insisted on smiling when I was angry at him. But when he told me of the death of his little child with a burst of laughter I knew that this was only one of the curious details of etiquette in this topsy turvy land."

The Turkey's Real Name. The original name of the turkey was oocoooco, by which it was known by the native Cherokee Indians. It is supposed that our pilgrim fathers, roaming through the woods in search of game for their first Thanksgiving spread, heard the oocoooco calling in the familiar tones of our domesticated fowl, "Turk, turk, turk." These first Yankee hunters, mistaking this frightened cry of the bird for its real song, immediately labeled it "turkey," and turkey it is to this day. Much more beautiful and musical was the Indian name oocoooco, the notes peculiar to the flock when sunning themselves in perfect content on the river beaches.—Sunset Magazine.

He Told the Truth. An Irish gentleman had a splendid looking cow, but she kicked so much that it took a very long time and it was almost impossible to milk her, so he sent her to a fair to be sold and told his herdsmen to be sure not to sell her without letting the buyer know her faults. He brought home a large price which he had got for it. His master was surprised and said, "Are you sure you told all about her?" "Bedad, I did, sir," said the herdsmen. "He asked me whether she was a good milker. 'Begorra, sir,' says I, 'it's you'd be tired milking her.'"—Seventy Years of Irish Life.

The Dragon Tree. The dragon tree (Dracaena draco), which yields the astringent gum resin called dragon's blood, is an old settler of the Canary Islands. A veritable colossus of this family once grew in the town of Orotava, Tenerife, which was eighty feet in circumference at the base, hollow inside, with a staircase for visitors to ascend to the branching top of the trunk. Humboldt remarks that its antiquity must have been greater than that of the pyramids. This giant went down in a hurricane in 1807.

He Sold and Left. A lawyer had a horse that always stopped and refused to cross a certain bridge leading out of the city. No whipping, no urging, would induce him to cross it, so he advertised him, "To be sold for no other reason than that the owner wants to get out of town."

A Strong Part. Soubrette—Yes, the understudy says he used to have a very strong part on the stage. Comedian—So he did. He used to be a scene shifter and lift the mountains and castles.—Chicago News.

Home Traits. "Isn't your husband dyspeptic?" "I rather think he is. I know he always disagrees with his meals."—New York Times.

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